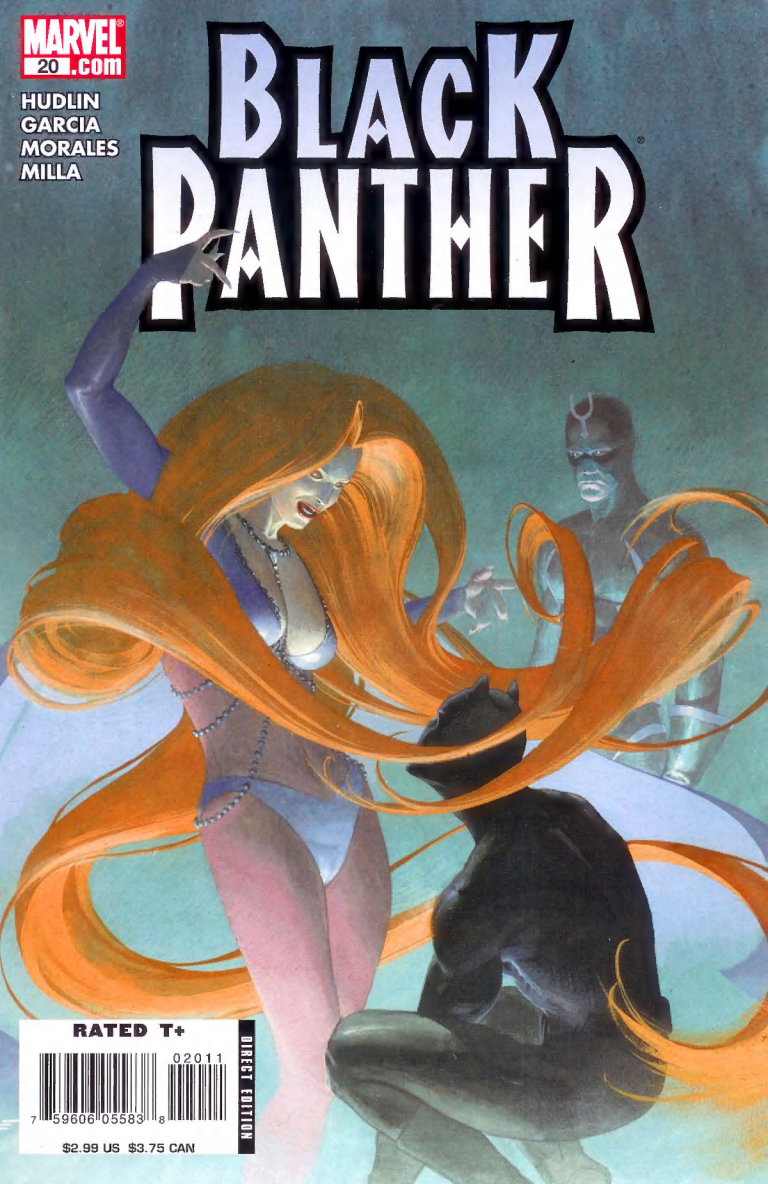
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PREVIOUSLY

Unfettered by the yoke of colonization, the African warrior nation of WAKANDA was allowed to flourish and became a high-tech, resource-rich, ecologically-sound paradise—one that makes the rest of the world seem primitive in comparison. Ruling over this kingdom are the BLACK PANTHER and his queen, STORM.

The Black Panther is more than just a head of state, the leader of a warrior cult. The Black Panther is the embodiment of the ideals of a people. While T'Challa's marriage to Storm was a happy occasion, the couple was reminded that Wakanda faces difficult times ahead. Now more than ever, Wakanda needs the Black Panther to preserve its integrity and guide its people through the political minefield created by the Civil War in the United States.

To assuage the fears of those who would see them as a threat and to ensure Wakanda's security in a world rocked by Civil War, the Black Panther and Storm thought it best to embark upon a diplomatic tour amongst the larger centers of global power. The couple's first stop was Latveria, where they were drawn into battle with their longtime adversary, Dr. Doom. Needless to say, the visit was not the ideal way to kick off a goodwill tour!

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WORLD TOUR PART TWO

FLY ME TO THE MOON

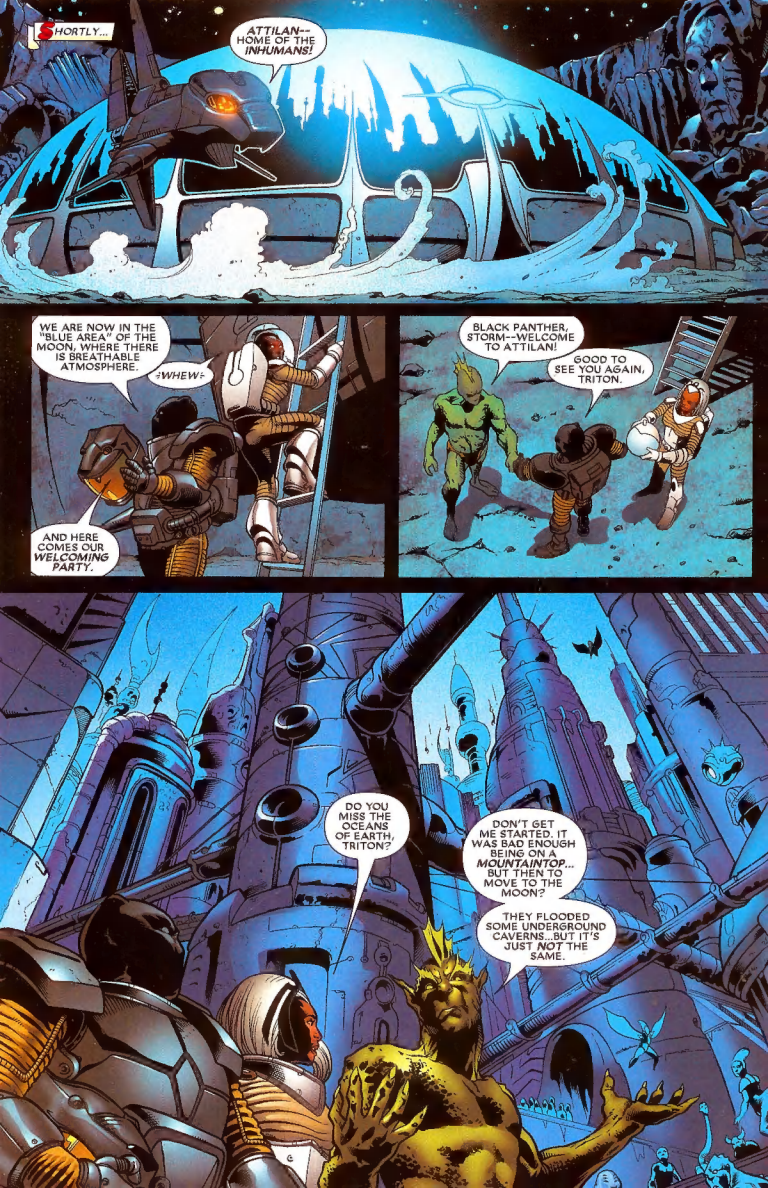
AND THINGS STARTED OFF SO WELL YESTERDAY....
WAKANDA...
ATTACK.
HI-YAH!
NICE REVERSE, SHURI!

I HATE THAT.
HATE WHAT?
THE CONDESCENDING COMPLIMENTS WHEN I AM TRYING MY BEST TO KNOCK YOU OUT!
ALL THAT ANGER DISTRACTS YOU.
I HATE YOU.
SORRY FOR INTERRUPTING, YOUR HIGHNESS. YOU HAVE A CALL--
--FROM THE MOON!
BLACK BOLT?
YES, YOUR HIGHNESS.
BLACK BOLT? IS HE EVEN USING A PHONE? OR IS HE JUST YELLING OUT THE WINDOW?
WHAT? IT'S A JOKE.
YOU KNOW, HE'S GOT THAT VOICE THING... REALLY LOUD?

BLACK BOLT REQUESTS A SUMMIT MEETING WITH YOU, T'CHALLA, AT YOUR EARLIEST AVAILABILITY.
I TAKE IT THIS MEETING IS ABOUT RECENT EVENTS WE ARE BOTH TANGENTIALLY INVOLVED IN AS A RESULT OF THAT MEETING SEVERAL YEARS BACK?
EDITOR'S NOTE: SEE CIVIL WAR: ILLUMINATI SPECIAL.
THAT, AND OTHER EVENTS YOU MAY NOT BE AWARE OF, GIVEN THE NEED FOR PRIVACY. THEREFORE, HE SUGGESTS MEETING HERE ON THE MOON.
FINE WITH ME.
DO YOU REQUIRE TRANSPORTATION HERE?
NO, THANK YOU, I HAVE MY OWN.
WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE TIMING OF ALL THIS. WE WAITED AS LONG AS WE COULD OUT OF RESPECT TO YOUR HONEYMOON. NO ONE KNOWS THE CHALLENGES OF MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP IN YOUR SITUATION LIKE I DO, ORORO.
I APPRECIATE THAT, MEDUSA.
I HOPE YOU WILL JOIN YOUR HUSBAND, THERE IS MUCH FOR US TO DISCUSS, AS WELL.
I LOOK FORWARD TO IT.
I'M GLAD YOU AGREED TO COME. THE VIEWS OF EARTH FROM THE MOON CAN BE VERY ROMANTIC.
I AM NEVER LEAVING YOUR SIDE. BUT I HATE SPACE TRAVEL. THE LACK OF ATMOSPHERE, THE CONFINES OF THE SHIPS...
...SPEAKING OF WHICH: THERE'S A WAKANDAN SPACE PROGRAM?!

DIDN'T I SAY HOW MUCH I DON'T LIKE THE KING AND QUEEN TRAVELING ALONE TO OUTER SPACE DURING WARTIME?
ONLY A HUNDRED TIMES, W'KABI. BUT IT'S ONLY THE MOON. IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE LEAVING THE SOLAR SYSTEM.
CAN SOMEONE TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM?
THE INHUMANS ARE POWERFUL PEOPLE. POWERFUL ENOUGH TO CHANGE THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE WORLD WERE THEY OF A MIND TO. IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES, WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THEY WILL NOT STAND AGAINST US SHOULD THE AMERICAN SUPER HERO CIVIL WAR SPILL BEYOND ITS SHORES.
WELL, THAT IS A "WHEN," NOT AN "IF." SO I'LL START THE COUNTDOWN.
I WOULD APPRECIATE THAT.
HOW ARE YOU DOING, ORORO?
FINE. JUST FINE. BRACE FOR TAKEOFF.
DON'T WORRY. WE'RE NOT STRAPPED TO A SKYSCRAPER OF LIQUID DYNAMITE LIKE MOST CONVENTIONAL SPACE-SHIPS. WE USE THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC WAVES TO SLINGSHOT US INTO SPACE.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN-- WHOA!!!

THAT REMINDS ME. DOESN'T THE *WATCHER* LIVE ON THE MOON?
IT IS HIS PRIMARY OBSERVATION POINT OF EARTH, YES.
DID YOU EVER FIND OUT WHAT HE WAS DOING AT OUR WEDDING?
THE WATCHER ONLY APPEARS ON EARTH TO CLOSELY OBSERVE EVENTS OF COSMIC SIGNIFICANCE. EXACTLY WHAT HE WAS WATCHING WE DON'T KNOW.
"HOWEVER, SOME OBSERVERS SWEAR WHEN OUR MARRIAGE CEREMONY WAS COMPLETE-- HE SMILED."
THE WATCHER... *SMILED?*
APPARENTLY IT'S ON TAPE.


SHORTLY...
ATTILAN--HOME OF THE INHUMANS!
WE ARE NOW IN THE "BLUE AREA" OF THE MOON, WHERE THERE IS BREATHABLE ATMOSPHERE.
=WHEW=
AND HERE COMES OUR WELCOMING PARTY.
BLACK PANTHER, STORM--WELCOME TO ATTILAN!
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, TRITON.
DO YOU MISS THE OCEANS OF EARTH, TRITON?
DON'T GET ME STARTED. IT WAS BAD ENOUGH BEING ON A MOUNTAINTOP... BUT THEN TO MOVE TO THE MOON?
THEY FLOODED SOME UNDERGROUND CAVERNS...BUT IT'S JUST NOT THE SAME.

T'CHALLA--THANK YOU FOR COMING.
IT IS MY PLEASURE. I GOT THE SENSE IT WAS URGENT.
IT IS, T'CHALLA. THESE ARE TRYING TIMES.
IT IS OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOUR LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH BLACK BOLT THAT WE'VE INVITED YOU HERE. WHATEVER HIS VIEW OF THE HUMAN RACE IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS, HE HASN'T LOST HIS TRUST IN YOU.
I'M HONORED TO HEAR THAT. AND HOW CAN I BE OF SERVICE?
CALL IT A CONSULTATION. YOUR OPINION IS NEEDED...
...AS THE INHUMANS CONSIDER WAR AGAINST THE HUMAN RACE.
"WAR"? *WHY?* WHAT HAPPENED?

THE CRYSTALS THAT GENERATE THE SACRED TERRIGEN MISTS THAT GRANT US INHUMANS OUR POWER HAVE BEEN STOLEN BY MY SISTER'S EX-HUSBAND PIETRO...
...AND SOMEHOW HAVE WOUND UP IN MILITARY HANDS.
THIS IS NO SMALL THING, T'CHALLA. THIS IS A THREAT OF THE HIGHEST ORDER TO OUR RACE. A THREAT TO OUR VERY SURVIVAL.
WHICH MILITARY?
DOES IT MATTER?
WE HAVE HIDDEN OURSELVES, EVEN RUN FROM OUR HOME PLANET, TRYING TO AVOID CONFLICT WITH THEM-- ENOUGH!
GORGON IS QUICK TO ANGER, BUT SPEAKS THE TRUTH. WE ARE TOO POWERFUL A PEOPLE TO SUFFER THESE INDIGNITIES.
IF THE ONLY WAY HUMANITY WILL RESPECT US IS THROUGH FEAR, THEN SO BE IT.
ARE YOU, BLACK BOLT, ALL OF ONE ACCORD WITH THIS?

THE KING AGREES. IT IS TIME FOR WAR.
THEN WHY AM I HERE? I SHOULD GO HOME AND PREPARE MY COUNTRY FOR INVASION.
OR AM I TO BE A HOSTAGE?
I ASSURE YOU NOT. YOU ARE HERE AT MY REQUEST.
CRYSTAL! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IT WAS MY *ESTRANGED HUSBAND, PIETRO,* WHO CAUSED THIS WHOLE MESS IN THE FIRST PLACE. PERHAPS I FEEL EXTRA RESPONSIBILITY TO EXPEND OUR *DIPLOMATIC* OPTIONS.
AND YOU, T'CHALLA--
--*YOU* POSSESS MORE CREDIBILITY THAN ANY HUMAN TO ARGUE FOR A MORE... *TEMPERED* APPROACH.
NO DISRESPECT TO THE GUEST OF THE KING, BUT THE PANTHER'S WIFE IS A *MUTANT*--JUST LIKE YOUR EX-HUSBAND, CRYSTAL! ISN'T HE GOING TO BE *BIASED?*
GORGON! YOU GO *TOO FAR!*
I SAID "NO DISRESPECT."
TO ANSWER YOUR EARLIER QUESTION: IT WAS THE *AMERICAN* MILITARY.
AH, YES...WELL, THAT MAKES IT MORE COMPLICATED. LET ME MAKE A SUGGESTION. I WILL MAKE SOME INQUIRIES, AND IF THE SITUATION IS BEYOND NEGOTIATION, I WILL TELL YOU SO.
THANK YOU, T'CHALLA. WE KNEW YOU WOULD BE HELPFUL.
MY PLEASURE.

ALL THIS...FOR US?
WE DON'T GET A LOT OF VISITORS. SO WHEN WE DO, WE GO ALL OUT.
I'M SO GLAD TO SIT WITH THE TWO OF YOU. I'VE HAD SO MANY QUESTIONS SINCE YOU MOVED TO THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON.
LIKE WHAT?
THERE WERE RUINS OF AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION IN THE BLUE AREA WHEN ATTILAN LANDED HERE. HAVE YOU DONE ANY ARCHEOLOGICAL STUDIES OF THEM?
WHY ARE YOU SO CURIOUS?
THAT IS *CLASSIFIED* INFORMATION!
PLEASE. NOT IN FRONT OF THE *HUMANS!*

BLACK BOLT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I ASSURE YOU, THERE IS NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN...
AND PEOPLE THINK I'M THE UNDIPLOMATIC ONE.
IT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN, SOONER OR LATER.
SINCE HIS VOICE WOULD DESTROY THE CITY, HE CAN'T GIVE ORDERS DIRECTLY. SO HE RELIES ON OTHERS TO FOLLOW THROUGH.
AND THINGS GET LOST IN TRANSLATION?
EXACTLY.

PERHAPS WE SHOULD EXCUSE OURSELVES. PLEASE TELL BLACK BOLT WE WILL BE IN TOUCH ONCE WE GET THE INFORMATION FROM--
HOW *DARE* YOU!
YOU HAVE INSULTED OUR *KING!*
KRAAAAASH
KARNAK-- WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*
I'M TIRED OF *OUTSIDERS* UNDERMINING OUR WAY OF LIFE!

SO YOU THINK STARTING A FIGHT WITH A ROYAL GUEST IS THE BEST WAY TO COVER UP MISTAKES MADE UNDER YOUR AUTHORITY?
YOU ARE RIGHT TO FEAR A BATTLE WITH ME.
I CAN SEE EVERY FRAGILE BREAK-POINT IN YOUR BODY. I COULD SHATTER YOU LIKE THAT TABLE.
TO QUOTE BRUCE LEE...
BOARDS DON'T HIT BACK!

YOU KNOCKED HIM OUT WITH YOUR FIRST STRIKE?
DON'T SOUND SO SURPRISED.
HE'S STILL BREATHING.
WHOOOOOOOOOOOOM
NOW YOU SHOW YOUR TRUE COLORS!
OKAY, THIS IS GETTING STUPID.
MAY I?
OF COURSE, DEAR. JUST A LOVE-TAP.
OF COURSE.

WAIT, YOU'RE KILLING HIM!
CRYSTAL....STOP. NO ONE IS KILLING ANYONE. THIS IS GETTING OUT OF CONTRO--
MMFPH!

WHAT THE HELL--
WHUP
--IS GOING ON HERE?
WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? THEY ATTACKED US.
AFTER WHAT WE JUST DISCOVERED, YOUR CREDIBILITY IS WEAK, TO SAY THE LEAST, GORGON.
WHAT GORGON SAYS IS TRUE. WHY ELSE WOULD THEY ATTACK CRYSTAL?
CALL THE HEALER!
CAN YOU JUSTIFY THIS BEHAVIOR?
SEE! THEY SNUCK OUT LIKE THIEVES! THEY'VE CONFIRMED THEIR GUILT!

WE SHOULD HAVE STAYED AND EXPLAINED OURSELVES, T'CHALLA.
WHY? WE'VE JUST BEEN ATTACKED THREE TIMES IN THE LAST 15 MINUTES.
YOU DON'T THINK BLACK BOLT WOULD LISTEN TO REASON?
MAYBE, BUT THERE'S NO UPSIDE TO FINDING OUT. I'M NOT GOING TO FIGHT A CITY FULL OF PEOPLE *ON THE MOON* JUST BECAUSE I ASKED AN INNOCENT QUESTION.
UHM...THERE'S NO *ATMOSPHERE* FOR ME TO MANIPULATE.
I HATE SPACE.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM. JUST GET IN THE SHIP WHEN I CLEAR THE WAY.
I'LL PICK YOU UP IN A MINUTE.

WOOM
YOUR SPEED GAVE YOU AN EDGE BEFORE, T'CHALLA, BUT NOW--
KER-RAK!

LATER...
...BLACK BOLT HAD BANNED THE USE OF ALPHA PRIMITIVES FOR MENIAL LABOR. APPARENTLY, SOME OF THE ROYAL FAMILY TOOK IT UPON THEMSELVES TO CIRCUMVENT HIS RULING.
IT WAS FOR THE GOOD OF THE KINGDOM.
WHO IS SUPPOSED TO PREPARE THE MEALS? SWEEP THE WALKS? INHUMANS ARE NOT MEANT FOR SUCH TASKS!
SILENCE!
THEY ARE MY FAMILY, BUT...
I WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY-- BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO DIDN'T ASK QUESTIONS BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW THE ANSWERS?
EXCUSE ME, ORORO. I MUST SPEAK TO YOUR HUSBAND.
ALONE.

LATER...
OKAY, THAT WAS WEIRD.
AFTER WE FIGHT HER WHOLE FAMILY--AND IT TURNS OUT THE INHUMANS STILL USE GENETICALLY BRED SLAVES--MEDUSA SEDUCTIVELY PULLS YOU INTO A PRIVATE ROOM WHILE I SIT THERE WITH HER HUSBAND.
YES, IT WAS WEIRD, WASN'T IT?
SO THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY ABOUT IT?
YOU WANT TO HEAR MORE?
DON'T PLAY WITH ME. I'LL MAKE YOU WALK HOME.
"SHE ASKED ME IF I COULD MAKE A VOICE CHAMBER OUT OF VIBRANIUM. IF THE SOUND-DAMPENING QUALITIES OF OUR MOST SACRED METAL COULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR BLACK BOLT TO SPEAK WITHOUT DESTROYING EVERYTHING AROUND HIM."
BUT HE'S SO POWERFUL WITHOUT WORDS.
THAT'S WHAT I SAID.
IS SUCH A DEVICE EVEN POSSIBLE?
I'LL TELL YOU THIS: IF WE DO FIGURE IT OUT...
...I'LL HAVE A MESSENGER DELIVER IT.
NEXT: NAMOR!

MAIL TO THE KING!

Who knew T'Challa had a panther rocket? How cool is that?!

Greetings, Panther Fans! Assistant Editor Daniel Ketchum here, bringing you the latest from your fellow readers and fellow Wakandans. As always we have plenty of mail, so let's go to it!

Wakandans,

B.B. King & Eric Clapton's "Riding with the King" song came to mind the instant I finished reading BLACK PANTHER #17. I felt as though I was riding with the King and all his friends, not reading a story.

No superheroics, just pure drama, sweet characterization, and depth of story. Luke "The Man" Cage and Logan's interaction, page 5, panels 3 & 4, was a great display of male bonding. And, their dialogue rings true when two men of their testosterone levels speak honestly and plainly.

Thank you: "Sweet Christmas," Luke says. Reggie using Luke's trademark phrase didn't come off as cheesy or forced. He used it appropriately.

Thank you: I know this is a super-hero comic, but I appreciate the human drama. I think too many comic writers feel they have to include some type of super-hero fights (action) in every issue. This formula wears thin quickly for me. Reggie shows there are different ways to include action, drama, and tension so that the reader isn't reading, but riding with the King.

As always, "Hail to the King."

Sophea Uk
Salem, OR

Thanks, Sophea!

Hello, Mr. Hudlin and Co.,

I just finished checking out the wedding. It was a spectacular read indeed. The joyous reunions that Ororo had with the Professor, her family and friends were very heartfelt. This union has great potential to shake things up in the Marvel Universe... and I can only imagine how their kids will turn out. So I anxiously wait. I applaud T'Challa's efforts for trying to have Cap and that idiot Iron Man take part in the festivities. But this Civil War is big trouble and it's out of T'Challa's hands.

The judgment that Ororo went through with the Panther God was intriguing but I knew there could only be one outcome because she's such a likeable individual. It sent chills through my body seeing Ororo descend from the heavens in that radiant wedding gown. Well, I wish the happy couple all the best but I wouldn't trust Doom at all. This honeymoon will be a crazy adventure. Thanks for putting out a great book. Peace.

Congrats,

Sheldon K. Andrews
Brooklyn, NY

Thank you for your letter, Sheldon! I'm glad to hear that you enjoyed the wedding!

T'Challa's attempt to resolve the conflict between Captain America and Iron Man may have backfired, but it doesn't necessarily mean that his involvement in Civil War is through. Stay tuned for more on this, especially as our couple's World Tour continues! (Any guesses as to where the last stop might be?)

And yes, as we learned from BLACK PANTHER #19, we probably shouldn't trust Dr. Doom one bit. Like Mama Ketchum always says: Don't take candy from evil Latverian dictators!

BLACK PANTHER #18. One word sums up the whole event: AWESOME!

The Cottrells
Arlington, TX

Simple and to the point. I LOVE it. Thanks, Cottrells!

MTTK,

OK. We get it. Reggie Hudlin is anti-Bush. Crystal clear.

I have an idea. Why don't you leave your political agenda out of comics and just tell good stories? I know that you write well, but you just can't help but blame President Bush for your woes. "Get on 'fore you get spit on?"

Classy stuff right there. Spit on the President of the United States? Really? You're that low-class?

You know there are plenty of Republicans and Bush-supporters who read your comics. Guess what, he's your president too. Democrats had their shot.

They lost. Get over it.

Speaking of lost, you've officially lost me as a reader. I'm just plain sick of Hudlin's political agenda popping up every other issue. It really saddens me because I've been a loyal supporter of this book for almost 8 years now. Give me a call when Hudlin leaves the book and I'll probably jump back on.

Capt. Jarrod "J-Bone" Alberich, USAF
Lackland AFB, TX

Thank you for your honest letter, Jarrod. I'm sure that your opinion reflects that of a number of readers. Here is Reggie's response to what you've written:

Republicans are some of my favorite BLACK PANTHER fans.

Ororo's maternal grandfather was part of a far left political sect before he went "off the grid" and into hiding for decades. That would be his attitude, which doesn't express my point of view any more than any other character. Of course, the President should have been there!

Dear Mr. Hudlin,

I just wanted to write and say how much I've loved your run on BLACK PANTHER. The Panther has been one of my favorite heroes for years and I'm glad someone is writing the comic and taking the character in some new and interesting directions.

Thank you for the good work you've been doing on the comic. I look forward to each new issue.

Josh Pritchett, Jr.
Charlottesville, VA

P.S. Any chance you'll do a Power Man & Iron Fist mini-series?

I'm glad that you're enjoying the book, Josh!

And keep your eyes peeled...you may see Luke Cage and Iron Fist team up sooner than you think! (Although, I must say, I never really got why Luke wore a tiara.)

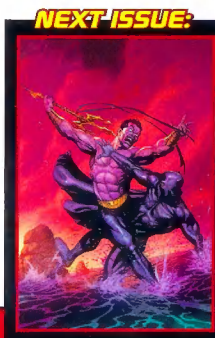
Next month, Black Panther and Storm break out the snorkels and submarines when their World Tour takes them to Atlantis!

But for now, I leave you with this photo sent in by True Father from Mesa, AZ. He wanted to share this picture of his marriage proposal...which bears a striking resemblance to that of T'Challa and Storm!

I'll see you in thirty!

--Daniel

NEXT ISSUE:



AQUA BOOGIE!

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